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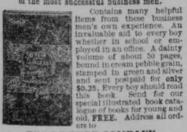
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SANTA CLAUS AT GRIMM'S RANCH.

the scattered jacals of Fort McKayett and prairies of southwestern Texas while the the holiday festivities; angry at the abomin-able cabbage-leaf cigar which refused to yield him solace from his woes; angry with with the disreputable looking "Greaser

How did you come by them?

The Mexican gravely held them forth in

me by the American, Senor Black-who sends the meat of goats across the seas in cans. The money is the price of 40 gonts that I drove from the Rio Concho." Wells regarded the Mexican with a search-

"I know Col. Bill Black, and his gold is But I think I know you, too. were in the hotel just now when I paid my bill, and I think I saw you last night at the store where I bought those cursed egars. I believe you want to learn if I have money, deers traveled principally in the dark. so you can relieve me of it farther out on the

The object of Wells' distrust threw his arms aloft in humble deprecation.
"The Sacred Mother knows-!"
"Never mind that nonsense," exclaimed
Wells, roughly. "I'm no baby, and I'll take



"THEY ARE GOLD, SENOR.

chances on you and all the Greasers in Mc-Kayett. I'll give you silver for your gold; nd here in this sack is more moneyand yellow-that you may have for the tak-ing. Don't be afraid of the guns-they are never loaded—but sail in as soon as you can raise your crowd and overtake me."

The Mexican made to reply to this bland bit of encouragement, but his scally excellented evilly from their covert of steel-gray brows, as they rested upon the plump ckskin pouch nestled between the buits a heavy shotgun and a winchester rifle He was profuse in his thanks for the American's kindness, but Wells' only response was a short grunt as he once more drew the bankets closely around him and chirruped

his not over willing team. It was a long drive to Menardville, and a longer one to the nearest railway station, the point for which Wells was now heading. Ever since the middle of November he had been driving here and there among the scat-tered ranches, on a collecting trip for his employers, a prominent firm of San Antonio merchants; and he was more than anxious to get back to civilization once more. He had been successful in his mission and had 'emitted several large sums by express; but

s collections had been heavy during the ist few days, and at least \$3,000, in bills and ere stowed away in his pockets and buckskin long at his feet. It was a and its people, and knew that the chance rnek with the villainous face and susemeanor of the goat-herder, and the as aroused by the little incident of morning hung over him during the en-

Without making his usual noonday halt, ever, evening came without anything hav of a lone ranch and, without the useless pre began divesting his tired horses of the har

a towheaded urchin of eight or nine years same stroking up from the near-by corral, into the buggy seat and drew inkets over his head until only his boyish ace and sparking eyes were visible.
"What's your name, mister?" he asked,
ith childlike directness.

Jack Wells. What's yours'

Hank Grimm. I'm only Little Hank Old Hank is my gran'paw, and he owns this ranch. The Mexicans call this 'Dos Botas Ranch,' 'cause gran'paw gives the 'two Eanch, 'cause gran'paw gives the 'two boot' brand. Say, mister, do you know who I thought you mought be when you driv'

"Two gold precess of \$20," he growled.
"Where are they? Are they counterfeit? then I allow he's got more whiskers'n you Still, he mought have shaved

Wells admitted that Santa Claus might, his dirty palm for inspection.

"They are gold, senor. They were given annual trip with a heard of three weeks" growth, or even a smoothly-shaven face. Farther than that he couldn't, under the circumstances, blame Little Hank for looking upon all strangers with an eye of supicton, but he thought the chances of pop ping his gaze on Santa Claus by dayligh were extremely small. Several millions of boys, in different parts of the world, had

That's the way he hit this ranch last Christmas, and I reckon he left it till about the last ranch on his rounds," remarked the boy. "He didn't leave me a thing that I nted-nuthin' but a little tin wagon and

a pound of candy. Say, mister, d'ye reckon Sorta Claus ever handles windchesters." The appearance of the elder Hank Grimm spared Wells the necessity of answering his difficult query. The owner of the "Two Boot ranch" was a man well advanced in years, and possessed of a sturdy, erect figure, square-cut features and sky-blue eyes, that told at once of German ancestry and of past service in the armies of the old world or the new. He welcomed the traveler hearty, directed him how to dispose of his corses for the night, and then abruptly turned away and entered the house. Little Hank remained behind and, in his quaint, boyish way, superintended Wells' every

A covey of quall that had been foraging in the vicinity of the crib flushed at their approach and settled in the prairie grass a short distance away. Little Hank clamored to have one of them killed for his Christmas breakfast, and to please him, on their rebird loads in his Parker, and, when the covey rose again, grassed three plump beau-ties with a hasty double shot. The boy was in perfect ecstasies over his success.

That's better'n you could do with a ndchester," he remarked, in a tone denoting that he considered this the height of possible praise. "Gran'paw says a shotgun s no good; but I reckon it depends a heap on who shoots it. I never seed but one bee, and it wasn't with shucks. It beaged to a man from Arkansaw, and he in't hit the broadside of a mule."

The travejer's effects were soon transferred to the living room of the ranch, where was introduced to the ranchman's aged fe, and found that the only occupants of place were themselves and their preious grandson. Grimm was a German of old school, with true Teutonic ideas of mfort, and it seemed that unusual preparions for the evening meal had been made honor of his visitors. All in the way of od that the ranch could offer was on the able, and, surmounting the array of snowy iscurits, ham and eggs, july steak and anned fruit, stood a group of ancient glass ecanters, their contents shining in a gradaof colors from deep red to straw yel-

Little flank seemed to look upon his share of the feast as an especial treat, and after it was disposed of his tongue ran more glibly

than ever. At length his grandsire suspended for a moment a morsel of beel half raised to his mouth, and uttered a word of reproof.

"Henry, my boy, it is not right that the children should talk and the grown ones listen. Remember, you should be very good to night. to-night. They say that Santa Claus to had boys is not kind."
"But see," retorted the lad, quickly. "I was good before and what did he bring me? Nothing. I wanted a windchester and he

brought me a tin wagon."

"The child would be a man before his time," put in his grandmother. "He talks of nothing but guns; and if he had them he would kill us all, and himself in the bar-

ther," said the boy, his eyes filling with dawn of hope for humanity, the day when

'And he killed by the Indians, as was he," responded the old ranchman. "My child, the

the "windchester" came up again, but no lengthy discussion followed. It must have been sometime after mid-

"Nobody but me Hank Grimm. Not gran paw, but the little one. You know-"

for me this Christmas." There was a fierce curse grittingly mut-tered; the sharp crack of a pistol; and then -boom! boom; -two thunderous reports less the ranch to their foundations. A dense volume of smoke rolled into the sleeping as an room, but Wells charged through it with men; ready rifle, reaching the outer apartment what just as old Grimm entered from another No. le

Little Hank lay beneath the huge table. groaning dismally and rubbing his shoulder. that they may slay the heathen who belie Otherwise the room was unoccupied; but a not in Ilim, and rescue from impious han



"I'VE GOT YOU THIS TIME SANTA CLAUS."

Wells dived beneath the table, brought forth the injured lad and placed him ten derly in a chair; but he at once struggled to his feet. "Turn loose the dog, gran paw, or he will git away. It's Santa Claus, and I'm chamber in which the ghosts of lost days blamed if he didn't miss me with his pistol right slap in my face. I never knowed afore that Santa Claus was an Arkansaw man."

walk walling for the sweet sin that left such deep and stinging wounds. He who bore the griefs of men yearns over the wandering

directly to the right, the whitewashed walls who have trodden with Him the road from were torn and disfigured with shot, and Bethlehem to Calvary, remember on this there were great splotches and dark, trick- | Christmas day that again He is born unto ing streams of something like red paint you and unto the world. You are the mes spining in the light of the lamp.

He turned to the old German; his fearand good-will that the Heavenly choir tures pale but collected.

"You will not need the dog," said he. "The man who tumbled through that window is lying where he fell-and I think I | dom that bought the highest good with it Wells was right in both his surmises. In "layin' fer Santa Claus" Little Hank had taken a step that to work the Lord."

taken a step that no midnight marauder could have foreseen. In forcing an entry to Grimm's ranch, the Mexican goat-herder, who had trailed Wells all the wa, from Me-Kavett, had gone directly to his death lay outside the window, as he had fallen when the bulk of two loads of buckshot had struck him, and when Little Hank gazed into his dead face, its pallor more ghastly still in the lamplight, he screamed and staggered back, covering his eyes with trembling

"I don't want to be a soldier," he sobbed. "I never want to kill another man as long as

But his sturdy old granddam-descended, no doubt, from a long line of warlike Teutons-took him in her strong arms con-

"But this man was a robber, my dear. Killing was his deserts, for he came to murder us all in our sleep. You saved our lives, and now would you turn coward and make us ashamed?"
"It was not a brave deed," growled old

Grimm. "The boy thought to shoot Santa Claus and killed a lazy thief of a Mexican instead. It was a buil's eye on the wrong target and no honor is won. Still, I am glad it has happened, for it may frighten hi babyish mind from this folly about soldier life and guns."

And so Kris Kringle did not visit the ranch that night, and Little Hank had to wait for his rifle-but not, as it chanced, so very long, after all. Arriving without very long, after all. Arriving without farther incident at his destination, Wells first care was to visit the different gunstores of San Antonio upon an errand the nature of which can be easily guessed. On New Year's Eve the McKavett stage halted at Grimm's ranch to deliver a package, and a few min-utes later the heart of the younger Hank was beating high with elation. Snugly packed in a neat box lay two guns-a tiny winchester and a light breech-loading shot-gun. It was a present fit for a king, and a costlier one than Jack Wells' slim purse could have stood unaided; but his emp ers had been told how their thousands were saved and graciously donated two per cent

ON CARTH GOOD WILL TOWARD

Grimms have been soldiers since the earliest days. I have fought, in my time, with brave men to lead me on to battle, and I tell you there is nothing in soldiering—nothing but hard work and slavery and bloodshed and death. It is a dog's life; nothing more."

Later is the watchers under neath the darkness the watchers under neath the midnight skies saw the rising of a glorious star, and its light is still shining upon the world to be a beacon amid the storm, to lead generations yet unborn to the humble manger sanctified by infinite love and compassion, and made holy by the birth

night when Wella was partially aroused by the knowledge that some one was moving in were to be made light by the love of the "That now, Santa Claus. I ve got you this of the Jews," but who reigns Lord of the nee, and either that windchester comes or earth, proclaiming now, as in the hour when

who had nowhere to lay Itis head, to the

ow down and worship Him, remember:

et your lives proclaim the message that th most careless eye can see. Gather up some wandering ray from the star shining over bard dirt floor lay a freshly discharged pis-tol and a Mexican sombrero.

wannering tay
the manger, and bear it into the dark places
of the earth, that it may light some soul in "It is robbers that have been here," ex-claimed the ranchman. "It is Mexican rob-pers, and they have shot my boy!"

of the earth, that it may light some soul in the midnight of despair, and lead it to the source of immortal radiance. Catch some wandering tone of the angelic song and repeat the strain above the pillow where Pain wards off the tender hand of Sleep, where the griefs of men yearns over the wandering Wells turned from the excited boy and approached the open window. Below it, and proclaimed on that first Christmas night you are to interpret the meaning of God b

> The Bachelor. He admits with a smile that is mocking. That Christmas no longer consoles; He hasn't a single stocking That ten't full of holes.

-Judge. AN AWFUL DEATH,



He-I understand Miss Goodgirl, Sunday school teacher, is dead. What was that was bung on the Christmas tree .- S

A Clear Field. She sung a Christmas carol— A lovely thing—it said: "Meet me under the mistletoe When papa's safe in bed." -Chicago Record.

That Is All. "What is the use of this article?" asked a

saved and graciously donsted two per cent.
of the entire amount towards rewarding the
principal actor in that Christmas Eve trag
edy at the "Two Boot ranch."

S. D. BARNES.

"I think it is intended to be sold for a
Christmas present."—Puck.

A CHRISTMAS COMEDY.

Rother Exciting, But All Concerned flow a Rejected Sultor Oot Even Are Expected to Recover.



mus go off at your house?" Mrs. Talkmuch asked, after she had told Mrs. much each of her and what she had exchanged them for afterwards.

We hope to be fully recovered from the efman saw the ultimate victory over death and the triumph of the immortal over the mortal. Christians Eve the children were so excited didn't agree with us. After he left, we found hard work and slavery and bloodshed and death. It is a dog's life; nothing more."

Later in the night, when Wells and Little Hank were snugly stowed away in the latter's bed, the question of Santa Claus and the "windchester" came up again, but no lengthy discussion followed.

"Peace on earth, good will to men," sang lengthy discussion followed."

"Peace on earth, good will to men," sang lengthy discussion followed."

"In a poor sleeper, anyhow. Why, I never close my eyes until I've made Mr. Spilkins did a clever and original thing in naming get up and investigate the smell of gas in the consideration."

"Peace on earth, good will to men," sang lengthy discussion followed."

smell gas until after I was married, but

kins said he'd get up and hang the stock-ings, said he could wake at any moment he hose. It seemed a pity that he never houses to wake at the regular hour for getting up, but I said nothing—at least very lit-tle. Etbel wasn't sleepy and wanted to hang

Yes, the worst thing about Love's young people need sleep!"
"M'am. Well, I knew I'd have to hang

those stockings, so when it was time I crept down to get them. We had left them on the dining table, but they were gone!" "Mercy, burglars!"

"I knew that and flew upstairs. As I reached the head of the stairs, I heard some one creeping along the hall. In a second I was in the bedroom, with the door locked, but Mr. Spilkins wasn't there!" "Gracious, had they-"
"Then came the most awful groans from yard below and I knew that they had led him and thrown him out of the win-I remembered then that I had bor wed his best necktie, the day before, with

forgiveness for the ink I had spilled a



WHEN HE HEARD WIFEY CALL FOR THE POLICE.

Murder!' Then, I heard some one trying my "The burglars, of course. Oh, you poor

Ethel, her voice sounding as it does when her little brother brings a mouse into the room. Seizing my umbrella, I went to her rescue. In the half I ran into the arms of a man and must have fainted for the second of the second a man and must have fainted, for the next thing I knew Mr. Spilkins was telling Ethel to burn the ostrich feathers on my new sonnet and see if that would not bring me

"It did, I'm sure! But I thought Mr. Spilkins was murdered and-"
"Well, he wasn't. He had gotten the stockings and hung them, when he heard

me call for the police and-'But the groans and Ethel's screams?' "The groaning noise was young Mr. Fiz-zleton, singing a serenade of Christmas hymns under her window. She slept through that, being roused by her father ratting at my door, and thinking I was murdered!" "Gracious! I hope that was the end of it!"

"It wasn't. The police came and seeing oung Fizzleton in the yard, they brough took haif an hour to induce them to let him go, and then they were still suspici While we were thus engaged, the children woke up and ate all the candy in their stock ngs. I spent the rest of the night between ministering to them and comforting Ethel, who feared that Mr. Fizzleton would blame her for his sufferings. Yes, it was rather an exciting Christmas, but, as I said, we hope to be fully recovered from its effects in a week or two." ELISA ARMSTRONG.

My dear Mes Bonds, your eyes pray lift (If this don't win her I am lost!)
And deign to view my humble gift; (I hate to think about its cost!)
May it find favor in your sight, (And bring about the end I seek!)
Although its value is but slight.
(I'll have to fast at least a week!)
-N. Y. World. Between the Lines.

Ensily Answered. Hojack-I often see the Christmas goose mentioned in Christmas stories. What is the Christmas goose?
Tomdik—The Christmas goose is the man

he can afford.-Judge. A Query. The question comes on each Christmas morn
To interrupt men's gentler mirth;
'How can the blowing of a horn
Assist in bringing peace to earth?"
-Washington Star.

who spends more money for presents than

All It Would Hold. Dog Faced Boy-Did yer get yer stockin' Living Skeleton—Yes, indeed.

Dog-Faced Boy—What'd yer get?

Living Skeleton—A cigarette. — Town

As Good a Theory as Any.

A CHRISTMAS SURPRISE.

with His Successful Rival.



has written-that he is sending us a little Christmas surprise," said Mrs. Meekmild, for the tenth time he could once be inhappy little home he would forget that I



THE LID WAS OFF THE BOX AT LAST.

No one, I'm sure. But he thawed as soon as he had seen our six little cherubs. How he laughed when little Josiah rode on my back and playfully kicked me in the

spilled milk on my best dress. What a pleasure it must have been to witness such felic ity. To be sure, I am sorry that he hap-pened to hear your remarks when my dress-

remembering to ask his consent, and v I was a lone widow, who could never earshot when you told me your honest opin ion of a man who could not match embroid ery silks better than I, after he had been called you. Odd, isn't it, that he has for-

box. I wonder what it contains? The children will be up at daylight to find out. Well,

as well as our own hard girl, I shall not in-sist that you write it Xmas, instead of Christmas, nor shall I call it appendicitis Personally, I expect tickets to Europe."
"Tickets to Europe, and I such a poor colors gives me seasickness! Nonsense, he has sent us the deed to a ranch in Texas."

"A ranch—and I so straid of cattle! How mean of you to think of such a thing. I'll never live on a ranch!"
"And I shall certainly not go to Europe!" "I shall, and I'll never speak to you again.

That trip to Europe-"
"Texas, you mean!" The lid was off the

lay before them, they flung themselves despairingly into each other's arms. The vicinin said be had forgiven us!" she

box at last, and a silence fell upon them, as

"He can afford to-be is avenged!" he

For the box contained: One music box. which played only rag time; one drum, a fif three borns, a toy plane, six packages of dynamite crackers, one Chinese gong, a toy pistol and a card, on which was written: "With Cousin Robert's best wishes for a very merry Christmast"

A Fulr Exchange. A Fair Exchange.

Now doth the callow youth prepare
To show he madly loves.
By sending to his lady fair
A Christiana box of gloves.
But ah, retentless, cruel fate,
The madden is not smitten,
And, as she must reciprocate,
She gives that youth the mitten.
-L. A. W. Bullette.

A TERRIBLE PUNISHMENT.



"What's your little brother cryin' for?" "He hung up his stockin' last night and Santy Claus brought him a little brother, but he wanted a drum!"—Ladies' Home

Sordid Soul.

Saymold Storey-What are you going to Tommy-What are all the men trying to get to the north pole for?

Willie (scornfully)-What, don't you hnow, gastey? Why, Santa Claus lives there.—Brooklyn Lafe.